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ABSTRACT

In New York the private and benevolent Free School Society began operations in 1805 because there were too few schools for the poor in the city, and it treated education as a regular separation from a seductive yet frightening world. Perhaps the most neglected and misunderstood period in the history of an organization whose activities have been examined by many scholars, the years between 1826 and 1832, stand as the Society's most vigorous time of internal change. It was then that the Society first thought to modify its practice of the Lancastrian system and began to offer special infant classes for the poor children of the city under six. Behind these reforms was an ill-fated attempt to make the Society's schools appealing and common to all instead of primarily for the poor, an experiment which proved both unworkable and detrimental to the trustees' conception of their schools as sanctuaries for preparing children to cope with a disorderly world. In the late 1820's when the Society experimented with common schools and infant education, there was some strong sentiment among the trustees for making education a more heterogeneous, open, and stimulating experience. But the trustees' anxieties about the changes taking place in New York inclined them after only a brief fling at reform to return almost completely to their original refuge mentality. (Author/JM)

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THE SCHOOL AS REFUGE:

THE NEW YORK PUBLIC SCHOOL SOCIETY'S YEARS OF DECISION, 1826-1832*

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In the historiography of the Jacksonian era recent work has stressed ambivalence as the frame of mind most characteristic of this important generation's response to a world rapidly changing around it. According to Paul Goodman and Michael B. Katz, for example, the growth of immigration, the city, and the factory held out to the elite in ante-bellum Massachusetts both the promise of fabulous profit and the threat of destructive instability. In a society marked by frenetic competition the bold action necessary merely to keep up was not just a source of pride but of anxiety as well lest it degenerate into "chaotic individualism which rewarded those unrestrained by standards of appropriate behavior." Using the insights of Alexis de Tocqueville, Marvin Meyers pioneered this interpretation in 1957, describing the Jacksonian as a "venturous conservative" who "became the anxious witness of his own audacity."[1]

Naturally, there was a strong impulse among many Jacksonians to resolve this ambivalence by creating a milieu committed to moderation and order -- what might be called the ideal of stable progress. To do so, it was thought, required not only the effective use of social pressure to control the entrepreneur, small as well as large, but also the elimination of all disruptive forms of social deviance which seemed to worsen with the acceleration of immigration, urbanization, and industrialization. Pauperism, crime, and insanity undermined the pursuit of stable progress, and as

David Rothman has shown in The Discovery of the Asylum, Americans in the early 19th century set aside colonial ideas about the inevitability of such kinds of deviance to work for their complete eradication. Possessed of a new environmentalism, reformers like Mathew Carey and Dorothea Dix shunned corporal punishment and home relief in favor of rehabilitation in America's first generation of prisons, almshouses, and insane asylums. With a new standard of social perfection to go with an 18th century vision of an ordered society they hoped to provide temporary yet curative refuge from the chaotic tensions and temptations of the Jacksonian world for those most in need of such sanctuary.

As a rehabilitative respite the ante-bellum asylum enforced regimen and conformity among a population of likes completely segregated from the outside world. It was a total institution similar to modern prisons and mental hospitals where, according to sociologist Erving Goffman, inmates lose their identity in being forced to adhere to a uniform and tight schedule of activities imposed from above and justified by "a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution." For the Jacksonian asylum that meant exchanging a mobile and fluid society for "an eighteenth century definition of a well-ordered community" to be implemented among peers by "a daily routine of strict and steady discipline" which would not only stabilize the deviants within but also help re-order society at large.[2]

But prisons, almshouses, and mental hospitals were not the only ante-bellum institutions to look and act in many ways like an asylum. Although confining their charges for only part of the day, schools frequently shared much with total institutions such as the Auburn penitentiary or the New York Lunatic Asylum. Like prisons in the 19th century, for example, they acquired more and more responsibility for a regulatory and educational role once practiced less formally but almost entirely by the family, the church, and the community. Moreover, in both the rural schoolhouse and the college dormitory of the time there were deliberate attempts at student isolation, compliance, and homogeneity as a condition of entry which paralleled life in the penitentiary or juvenile home. It was the city school, however, which many regarded as the formal institution most directly responsible for the maintenance of order and stable progress in Jacksonian America, and it often took on enough of the characteristics of a total institution to be thought of as a refuge if not a full-fledged asylum. As a case in point, the wide incidence of poverty in early 19th century Philadelphia inclined the Quaker philanthropist Roberts Vaux to spearhead the creation of a school system which exhibited at least two of the most important features of total institutions. Throughout its existence between 1818 and 1834 this first Philadelphia system combined the regimentation of the Lancastrian method with a requirement that every child come from a pauper home in order to attend.[3]

In New York the private and benevolent Free School Society began operations in 1805 because there were too few schools for the poor in the city, and with the asylum in mind it treated education as a regular if not total separation from a seductive yet frightening world. Financial limitations at the very least ruled out any prospect of the Society's schools ever being twenty-four hour institutions, as such radical reformers as Frances Wright and Robert Dale Owen favored in the late 1820's for public education as a whole. But otherwise the Free School Society closely approximated an asylum model for most of its history. Controlled by the city's elite, it operated Lancastrian schools for the poor until 1853 and saw itself as protecting the existing social and economic structure of New York not only by teaching Protestant values to those most likely to go astray but also by immersing them daily in an atmosphere of uniformity and discipline. And even during its most active period of re-evaluation and self-imposed reform the Society's original approach to the school as a refuge was apparent and became, for the Society at least, irreversible.[4]

Perhaps the most neglected and misunderstood period in the history of an organization whose activities have been examined by many scholars,[5] the years between 1826 and 1832 stand as the Society's most vigorous time of internal change. It was then that the Society first thought to modify its practice of the Lancastrian system and began to offer special infant classes for the poor children of the city under six.

Behind these reforms was an ill-fated attempt to make the Society's schools appealing and common to all instead of primarily for the poor, an experiment which proved both unworkable and detrimental to the trustees' conception of their schools as sanctuaries for preparing children to cope with a disorderly world.

As chartered in 1805, the Society's purpose was merely to supplement the existing denominational charity schools by educating those poor children in New York "not provided for by ... any religious society." Three years later, however, the state legislature broadened the Society's charge, passing a law entitling it to enroll all the children in the city eligible for "a gratuitous education."[6] Such progress was not accidental. The board of trustees which ran the Society had cultivated the local political leadership, accepting fifty children from the New York Almshouse in 1807 in exchange for a building nearby and $500 to repair it. At the same time the state began its long financial commitment to the Society, contributing $4,000 for capital expenses and promising an annual stipend of $1,000 for "promoting the benevolent objects of the Society."[7] Other special grants were forthcoming from Albany in 1810, 1811, and 1819. Revenue from the state school fund, first distributed in 1814, was apparently proving to be insufficient by the end of the decade in New York City, but the trustees persevered in the hope that they could "build school houses in every section of the city and ... multiply

their establishments, till every indigent child" could receive free "a good common education."[8] As was said by Assemblyman Gulian C. Verplanck in 1822, the Society was not just "a local establishment" but rather a "healing remedy" for crime and poverty which "if suffered to spread" could "poison and corrupt the whole body of the state." To do away with such evils, the trustees said, their schools were an antidote preferable to such comparable yet ex post facto institutions as "the Alms-house, penitentiary, or States-prison."[9]

Combined with consistent public support, the dedication of its trustees meant the steady growth of the Free School Society which doubled the number of its schools and the size of its enrollments between 1817 and 1820.[10] But the competition for public money in education was increasing too, and the immediate inducement for the Society's reforms of the 1820's was a dispute between the Society and the Bethel Baptist Church over the use of the common school fund in New York City. After the state legislature denied a request by the Society for an additional construction grant in 1822 the trustees were quick to criticize when Albany approved a controversial petition by the Bethel Baptist Church. It asked that the Church be allowed, as the Society already was, to expand its charity school operation with any money from its share of the common school fund remaining after the payment of its teachers' salaries.[11] With the explosive issue of church and state argued no more than the ordinary question of how to provide the best schools for

the city, two years of debate eventually brought the repeal of the Bethel school law and the total exclusion of all the denominational charity schools in New York from a share in the common school fund.[12]

The trustees of the Free School Society were generally satisfied with the outcome of the controversy, but it did more for them than just reduce the competition. Forced to defend the Society's record in a more complex world than the one in which it began, the trustees rethought their raison d'être and decided at length to retreat from the Society's long-standing refuge mentality. They would abandon their commitment to the familiar and reassuring homogeneity of pauper education in favor of the heterogeneity of common schools. The idea for such a drastic change originated with a School Fund Committee appointed by the Society in January, 1824. Its job was to protect the trustees' interests in Albany during the Bethel controversy, and later it was authorized to approach the New York Common Council when the legislature designated it as the agency responsible for naming the recipients of the city's portion of the common school fund.[13] In requesting what it never got, a local monopoly of the school fund, the committee proposed that the Society "unite all classes of our citizens" by replacing education strictly for the poor with a policy of admitting children regardless of their background. To counter their pauper reputation the Society's schools would exact a small fee from

those who had money to pay. Not only would that bring in the children of the middle class but also the proud and industrious poor who would "doubtless take a greater interest" in their children's education "and be more likely to require punctuality." For their part, the children of the disadvantaged would now regard their parents with more "respect and gratitude," and greater "feelings of independence ... would be promoted among our poor and labouring classes."[14]

The trustees of the Free School Society did not invent the idea of a pay plan to make schools for the indigent more appealing. Instead they learned its alleged advantages from the reports of the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland and the British and Foreign School Society.[15] Although unwilling to give the trustees "the whole amount of the school fund" in New York, the Common Council approved the pay plan idea on the recommendation of its Law Committee which argued that such an arrangement would attract children from all social classes and break down "the distinctions that now divide ... the rising generation." Albany followed suit in January, 1826, sanctioning the use of the plan while renaming its sponsor the Public School Society whose "duty", commensurate with its new name, would be to educate "all children in the city of New York not otherwise provided for" whether or not they were "the proper objects of gratuitous education."[16]

Such talk envisioned drastic reform for public education in New York. To be sure, there was nothing novel about the

idea of using the school as an instrument of social cohesion. But to be as heterogeneous as Jacksonian society itself promised as much unsettling conflict as order in the school. New York's poor, of course, were never without significant ethnic and religious differences, but for the Society to abandon the economic homogeneity of a pauper population in favor of admitting rich and poor alike was for it to compromise an important source of student conformity. Such a move was a step away from the uniformity of the new asylums. They sought by concentrating on criminals, paupers, or the insane to stabilize their inmates and fortify them against the temptations and stimulations of an increasingly heterogeneous world, and the trustees of the rechristened Public School Society never committed themselves entirely to the common school idea. Until the repeal of the pay plan in 1832 they vacillated between their traditional concept of the public school as simply a pauper refuge and an ambivalent image of public education as a source of both order and invigoration through the joint training of all.

In requesting the legislature's approval of the pay plan in 1825 the Society avoided reference to common education and emphasized how the plan would bring the poor into its schools in ever greater numbers. When that did not happen after the plan was installed in May, 1826 and enrollments dropped sharply instead, the trustees appointed a special committee to investigate the problem.[17] What it found was a preference for charity

among the poor in general, although the committee admitted that some parents, "too poor to pay," had withdrawn their children because they were "too proud to confess their poverty." One response was the hiring of a visitor or truant officer, a post which the trustees created in 1828 because it was "their constant wish and undiminished care" to give top priority to "those of the poorest grade" in society even though they were also "desirous of seeing children of the middle and higher walks of life partaking of the benefits of the Public Schools."[18]

This thinly-veiled reversion toward student homogeneity as a condition of entry, characteristic of the Society's refuge mentality, was not acceptable to all the trustees of that organization. Those on the pay plan evaluation committee of 1827 urged the Society to "open its doors to all classes of children free of any expenses." A new "public tax," the committee said, should be levied to offset any deficits beyond the local amount of the state school fund.[19] In the winter of 1828 the Society's Executive Committee took the same position, proposing a public appeal to convince all of the need for an annual property tax in New York City to enable the Society to "Educate in the best manner all classes of Children Free of Expense." Boston's tax-supported common schools were touted as worthy of emulation for the "moral welfare" of the city, however aggravating such a comparison with an arch rival must have been to some of the local enthusiasts on the Society's board.[20] Notwithstanding, the trustees quickly published an

address written by the Executive Committee advocating an education tax of ½ mill on every dollar of real and personal property in New York.

Long and involved, the Society's statement reads less like an address to the public and more like the Society arguing with itself. In confusion and conflict over the rationale for the property tax the trustees were really undecided about the refuge mentality and their future role in Jacksonian New York. Was such a tax necessary because of the 12,000 poor and immigrant children in the city who had never been to school and for whom the likely alternative was "the cost of their maintenance in our almshouses and penitentiaries?" Or was it to make the Society's schools "equally desirable for all classes of society?" Common schools could supply "the advantages of a free intercourse and competition between persons of all ranks and conditions of life" while reminding the poor to understand and accept their generally restricted place in society. When "the highest rewards of merit are felt to be equally offered to all," the trustees smugly wrote, then "the real worth of outward distinctions is perceived" and "jealousies which are too apt to arise from differences of condition are melted away," leaving sentiments "between the different classes ... of mutual advantage and dependence, and not those of hostility."[21]

That politics influenced the trustees' address to the public stands to reason. As advertised, the property tax would

make the Society's schools all things to all people, but the conflicts and contradictions expressed were far from mere political expediency. The trustees were uncertain and confused, as they had been for many months, about whether their schools should be like asylums in being exclusively for "the children of the poorest," as they put it in 1827, or common pay schools to instill both a universal respect for order and "those feelings of independence which every philanthropist must desire to foster" among the rising generation of the lower class.[22]

Politically motivated or not, the Society's appeal was effective. At the request of the New York Common Council the state legislature in April, 1829 gave the city the right to levy a 1/8th mill tax on every dollar of real and personal property in New York. But the Council's support stemmed from only one estimate of the Society's role in the city. On the advice of two of its subcommittees it took the position that such a tax could help diminish crime and pauperism as well as strengthen republican government by funding the construction and maintenance of new schools for New York's 20,000 uneducated children.[23] It would not be long before the Society itself returned to such a unilateral view.

In 1831 the state legislature honored the Society's original tax request, raising the assessment limit on the property tax to ½ mill on the dollar.[24] But the Society was no longer the same, having just decided to recommit itself almost entirely to its old, familiar role as a refuge to train and discipline

the poor. With tuitions down as poor families neglected to pay, the Society effectively abolished the scholar payment plan by making tuition fully optional. In the event that "some parents would not send their children ... unless they were permitted to pay" the trustees did not cancel tuition completely until the winter of 1832 when 1,000 empty seats brought them to end all pupil payment. Meanwhile, a special committee appointed to study the problem of weak attendance recommended the visitor concentrate on New York's poor districts and the city's benevolent associations be asked to encourage their clients to send their children to school. In the spring the Society enhanced its stress on pauper education and returned closer to a refuge mentality when, at its request, the Common Council resolved to strike from public relief all destitute families which failed to put their children in school for as many months each year as the Society should specify.[25]

Never again would the Society seriously consider promoting common schools. Despite strong incentives to the contrary in the 1830's from Boston and Philadelphia the trustees remained loyal to "the poor" as "the especial objects of their solicitude." Being "mainly supported by taxes," the Society's schools did not turn away middle and upper class children, although perfect consistency with a refuge mentality would have dictated such a policy.[26] In fact, many middle class children probably attended, and the controversy with the Roman Catholic Church in the early 1840's over the distribution of the common school

fund in New York City even prompted some claims by the trustees that the Society ran truly common schools wherein "the children of the rich and the poor, of the American and the Foreigner, all mingled as a band of brothers." But from their lofty perspective as members of the city's elite it was also easy for the trustees to lump the lower middle class children in their schools with the poor, and during the debate with the Catholics the trustees more often billed themselves as the special friends of the poor. In October, 1840 one of their lawyers, Theodore Sedgwick, told the Common Council that the trustees' "only object" was "to supply education to the poor." The state legislature later learned from the Society that in New York the school fund was spent "mainly" on those who were "the proper objects of gratuitous education," while in 1841 the trustees' Executive Committee described the Society's "duty" as "to procure the attendance at school of the neglected and vagrant children of the city."[27]

That the Public School Society soon retreated from common education when the poor deserted its schools testifies to the concern of its trustees for working-class education and social control. But the education of the poor was not reinstated as the Society's primary purpose simply because the poverty-striken stayed away. Given the failure of the pay plan, the trustees had little choice, for at a time when the modern meaning of public in education was still developing free schools for rich and poor alike were beyond the imagination of most Americans.

Moreover, the trustees were attracted to pauper education once again because common schools, whether free or pay, were too similar to the diverse and disorderly world of Jacksonian America. Heterogeneous by definition, they could not be fully reconciled with the Society's traditional refuge mentality which, aiming at more than just keeping the poor in their place, envisioned a stable community in firm contact with the values and the scale of life in the past. Common schools could be viewed as consistent with this general goal, but in an increasingly chaotic world the trustees saw them as also able to accentuate differences and stimulate independence. They could encourage disorder, and their trial even inclined the trustees to reconsider in the name of social stability their long-standing faith in the value of competition in school.

Competition was integral to the Lancastrian method which most of the Society's schools practiced throughout their history. What became a pedagogical fad in America in the 1820's first came to New York in 1805 when the fledgling Free School Society adopted the efficient and economical system of the English school reformer Joseph Lancaster on the advice of one of its founders, the Quaker philanthropist Thomas Eddy.[28] Student monitors did most of the work in Lancastrian schools, and the successful assignment and completion of tasks required custodial maintenance of rigid rules and resolute authority. Unruly pupils were expelled at least as early as 1817, and as described by the Society in 1842, its monitors guarded against

"any evil tendency by ... constant checks" while "continual attention to a strict drill" induced "habits of industry, order, and submission to the laws." Yet the Lancastrian method also cultivated "a proper independence of thought and action" by the use of "mutual instruction" and a competitive spirit through the principle of emulation as the basis for student motivation.[29]

In the Society's schools there was no solitary study or learning for its own sake. Pupils were constantly measured in public against set standards and one another in open competition for prizes and the ultimate honor of becoming a monitor. As early as 1809 the trustees were dispensing tickets negotiable for kites, balls, and wooden horses while an "order of merit" was open to those who excelled at "their studies" and in "their endeavours to check vice." When improvements were made in the schedule of tickets in 1818, the trustees also ordered that the toys to be won be displayed in each school in a glass case.[30] Corporal punishment in the Society's schools was both commonplace and acceptable at first, although Lancaster himself expressly condemned it, favoring public humiliation in shackles or hobbles instead. Over the objections of their teachers in 1823 the trustees decided to ban corporal punishment except as a last resort. Like many of their contemporaries who organized mental hospitals and prisons the trustees preferred the use of good example to physical punishment. "A liberal system of Rewards," they

wrote, "will have a much stronger tendency to keep up a spirit of emulation among the pupils than the fear of ... frequent Punishments."[31]

After their experiment with common schools the trustees of the New York Public School Society re-examined their already orderly but competitive Lancastrian methodology in the interest of making their schools even less stimulating and more disciplined than ever before. While retreating towards the socio-economic homogeneity of the refuge mentality and its asylum model, the trustees also reassessed their commitment to the principle of emulation and their system of rewards. A new set of by-laws approved in 1833 replaced "the pecuniary reward" of such trinkets as penknives, scissors, and thimbles with "a system of honorary rewards by premium certificates" for good schoolwork and behavior. Not only had "the amount of labour involved" in awarding toys become too much for the Society to handle but "the doubtful tendency of the measure itself" now occurred to the trustees.[32] It was not the first reform of the Society's prize system; in 1829 the trustees installed tighter accounting procedures in the distribution and redemption of tickets because too many dishonest scholars were buying or stealing them to acquire toys or even dispensation for deliberate infractions of school rules.[33] But the changes of 1833 were the first to question the principle of emulation. Nor were they to be the last, and judging from the actions of the Society's Library Committee, at least some

trustees at the time must have considered them insufficient. In the winter of 183? the Library Committee recommended the Society open its school libraries to all, not just the top fifty scholars in each school. It would be 1847 before this proposal became policy, but seven years earlier the Society all but abolished its old reward system. In a further de-emphasis of head-to-head competition the trustees supplanted the honorary premiums awarded since 1833 for scholarship and deportment by similar certificates for the more modest attributes of punctuality and regular attendance. These qualities, they said, were "within the reach of every child" while "the ordinary practice of giving rewards in schools for proficiency in lessons and good conduct" stirred "the evil propensities and dispositions of the youthful heart." Such competition "promoted rivalry and mutual jealousy" and "discouraged the unsuccessful" among the Society's pupils.[34]

According to historian Michael B. Katz, the Society always practiced emulation in the hope that by programming working-class children "from an early age to compete with one another" they "would not grow up to form a cohesive and threatening class force."[35] However questionable such a generalization might be about the trustees' psychological sophistication, or lack thereof, it is clear that the Society's dedication to competition in the classroom dissipated sharply after 1832. In 1845 the trustees even disclaimed Lancaster's reliance on humiliation to induce good behavior. After twenty years of

telling their teachers to rely when necessary on "shame rather than ... pain," they now recommended vigilance and kindness instead of poor substitutes for the rod like "wearisome burdens, unnatural and long-continued restraint, public exposure, and badges of disgrace." Such treatment would only be effective with the smallest boys, and even then the instructor had to be watchful and curtail punishment before remorseful feelings turned to the more combative and competitive emotions of "pride, anger, and malevolence."[36]

Disenchantment with emulation as an educational principle was not unique to New York. As Katz himself has demonstrated in The Irony of Early School Reform, it had many critics elsewhere. In Beverly, Massachusetts William Thorndike, a wealthy merchant and prominent school committeeman, believed that "purer motives should stimulate the mind and swell the heart, [rather] than those which proceed from the promise of pecuniary rewards." The practice of emulation in the Boston grammar schools prompted one educator to complain that it represented "the commencement of that competition, -- that perpetual scrambling for the loaves and fishes, -- that feverish aspiration for office and place, -- which we see in after-life going on all around us, and which makes the eye of enlightened humanity weep." According to Katz, such rejections of emulation and extrinsic motivation were characteristic of the so-called "soft-line" educators of the day like Horace Mann whose "emphasis on teaching through an appeal to interest was,

implicitly, an assertion of the importance of the individual." Matched against their preference for centralization and order, such a child-centered stance among educators like Mann seems curiously out of place, as Katz himself is not altogether unaware.[37] But interpreted in other ways the curtailment of emulation in Massachusetts and New York is not so paradoxical. With bureaucratization underway both in Boston and New York[38] it made organizational sense to de-emphasize competition, and in Jacksonian America a more passive methodology was good classroom strategy in general. Applied with a minimum of violence and emulation, the Lancastrian pedagogy of the Public School Society would discourage not generate such disruptive emotions as pride, rivalry, and jealousy and in the judgment of the trustees would better prepare the children of the poor to resist the anarchic temptations and pressures of life in Jacksonian America.

The recommitment of the Society to a refuge mentality did not mean its entire disregard for the dignity of the individual and the importance of the child's role in his own education. As a whole, the trustees again agreed that temporary and intermittent isolation in a regimented, homogeneous, and non-competitive atmosphere was the best way to prepare the children of the poor to lead orderly and disciplined lives. But in an increasingly complex and chaotic world could the conformity of the Society's schools supply moral ballast for a lifetime? In 1824 the trustees boasted that since the

beginning not one of their 20,000 pauper registrants had ever been traced to criminal court. On the other hand, they could not avoid at least some uncertainty about the wisdom of their refuge mentality even after 1832 as more and more schoolmen and reformers began to respond to the growing disorder of American life by challenging the power of regimentation and uniformity in the classroom.[39] But the Society never dedicated itself to a more open and freer brand of education. And what doubts it had about the relative merits of an authoritarian vs. a child-centered pedagogy emerged most clearly in its program of infant education begun in the late 1820's when the trustees were still experimenting with common schools.

New York City was not an American pioneer in early childhood education. There were schools for children as young as four underway in Boston by 1818, and the Children's Asylum in Philadelphia was teaching 100 poor children in the Southwark neighborhood "according to the plans used in /British/ infant schools" as early as 1826. One year later the New York Infant School Society opened its first classroom on Canal Street for children eighteen months to six years with "its primary object" being "to instill right sentiments into the infant heart while still soft and tender."[40] The ultimate credit for these beginnings, of course, belongs to Robert Owen, the Scottish industrialist, whose reputation as an educator soon spread to America when he organized schools for factory children eighteen months to ten years in New Lanark, Scotland after acquiring

part interest in the mills there in 1799. Unsympathetic to artificial rewards and punishments, Owen stressed governance by kindness and the development of intrinsic controls through experience. The child's own actions would teach him the most important lesson of all, "the intimate, inseparable, and immediate connection of his own happiness with that of those around him."[41]

The Public School Society first conducted classes for the very young in the fall of 1827 when it opened a Junior Department in the basement of School No. 8 for children three years to seven or eight. Rapidly filling, it soon had more than 300 pupils, but its Lancastrian organization must have been a disappointment to those who admired the more child-centered pedagogy of Robert Owen and his disciples who founded the London Infant School Society in 1824.[42] When the New York Infant School Society asked the Public School Society for a basement to house a second classroom in 1827, the trustees decided to respond to infant education, but their initial reaction was uncertain and ambiguous. In keeping with the Society's reform spirit of the late 1820's, the special committee appointed to weigh the request praised the Infant Society's system in use at Canal Street for its avoidance of rote learning and its stress on "the knowledge of things and ideas, ... the whole illustrated by visible objects and verbal explanations calculated to excite the attention and interest the feelings of the infant mind." But infant schools,

the committee said, also deserved a trial for much more pressing reasons. With both parents at work in so many families early childhood education was an urban essential to keep "the younger children of the poor" off the streets and away from "the contamination of vice" while preparing them by "the inculcation of moral, ideal, and literal knowledge" for the demands of adult life.[43]

In the spring of 1828 the Infant School Society got its basement room in Public School No. 10, but like its special committee, the Public School Society as a whole equivocated in justifying the move. Although the Lancastrian system was "too dull and monotonous to command and retain the attention of the Infant mind," the trustees could not resist pointing out that once poor children learned to talk they were "capable ... of being trained in habits of moral order."[44] Comparable to their choice between pauper and common schools, the trustees wavered between their traditional authoritarianism and a more open and stimulating atmosphere for early childhood education. But while pauper and common schools were clearly different alternatives, the incompatibility of the Lancastrian method and infant education was far less apparent at first to the trustees of the Society. Perhaps the younger children of the poor could learn lasting standards without contradiction both through indoctrination in a protected environment and through an appeal to the dignity and initiative of the individual.

In the 1830's the Society sorted out the distinctions

between its two approaches to early childhood education, but despite the sharpened contrast, the trustees never entirely overcame their indecision about which one to use in New York. In the fall of 1830 they transformed the Lancastrian Junior Department in School No. 8 into a more child-centered infant school like the one in No. 10 and calling both Primary Departments, adopted official rules for their management.[45] An investigation of Boston's successful classification of its public school pupils by age and achievement strengthened the Society's commitment to schools for the very young. But the trustees were not convinced that early childhood education should even be partially open and free, and before the next two Primary Departments appeared in 1833 the Society opened five simplified monitorial schools for children as young as four.[46] "Of great convenience to the families residing in their immediate neighborhood," these Primary Schools, as they were called, taught "habits of order, obedience, and cleanliness" at an age when close supervision was essential to "the formation of character, and the extirpation or prevention of bad habits." Judged a success by 1835, they multiplied quickly, numbering fifty-one by 1840. With five of these Lancastrian schools set aside for New York's black population and two others for the very young children of German immigrants, the Society had organized its Primary Schools in accord with both the regimentation and homogeneity of their asylum model and refuge mentality.[47]

The Primary Schools and Departments differed not only in terms of their pedagogical style. Enrolling children as young as two and boys no older than six, the more open and child-centered Departments had a somewhat younger student population. Nor were they ever envisioned as feeders for the Society's upper schools in as direct a fashion as were the Primary Schools.[48] But the clientele and objectives for both overlapped enough to make them competing alternatives, and if numbers are any indication, the trustees clearly preferred the more orderly Primary Schools. In 1840 they outnumbered the Primary Departments by almost four to one, and five years later the Society's Executive Committee proposed that the Departments be made more like the Primary Schools, using the "same books and apparatus" as well as "the same system ... as far as the arrangements of the rooms will permit."[49]

Sometimes the Society's leadership inclined in the other direction. In January, 1839 the Executive Committee asked the Primary School Committee to make its schools more like the Primary Departments by establishing a special section in each for children as young as 2½. The Primary School Committee refused on the grounds that its schools were already overcrowded, but when it complained a few months later that most of its pupils dropped out more than two years short of completing its five year course, the Executive Committee again recommended that the Primary Schools become more like the Primary Departments. Although starting with younger pupils

and keeping them fewer years, the latter sent 10% more of their enrollees to the Public Schools between February, 1838 and February, 1839. "With children under six years of age," said a subcommittee of the trustees, "moral and physical education are far more important than instruction in letters," and the "repeated intermissions" and "varied exercise" of the Departments made theirs the "preferable system" for early childhood education.[50]

The Primary Departments notwithstanding, the trustees of the New York Public School Society stressed conformity as the proper style for schools in an increasingly disorderly America. In the late 1820's when the Society experimented with common schools and infant education, there was some strong sentiment among the trustees for making education a more heterogeneous, open, and stimulating experience, and a trace of this kind of thinking survived in the Primary Departments to the end. But on the whole, the trustees' anxieties about the changes taking place in New York City overcame their urge to alter their protective motif and inclined them after only a brief fling at reform to return almost completely to their original refuge mentality. Only in a sheltered atmosphere of authority, homogeneity, and order could the children of the poor learn to resist the temptations of life in an era which threatened to get out of hand. That the controversy with the Roman Catholics in the early 1840's aroused widespread sympathy for more heterogeneity in public schools was not to be prevented by the

Society's trustees. Nor could they anticipate that the melting pot theory of education would help make their refuge approach a mere forerunner for the regimentation and standardization of the emerging bureaucratic ethic. In an age overcome by change the trustees' desire for stability prompted them to make their schools comparable to the many penitentiaries, almshouses, and insane asylums then answering the same call for order so acutely felt by those elite citizens of New York who led the Public School Society between 1805 and 1853.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Paul Goodman, "Ethics and Enterprise: The Values of the Boston Elite, 1800-1860," American Quarterly, XVIII (Fall, 1966), 437. Michael B. Katz, The Irony of Early School Reform - Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts (Cambridge, 1968), 40-50, 116, 149-150 & 158-60. Marvin Meyers, The Jacksonian Persuasion (New York, 1957), 42-56. John W. Ward, "Jacksonian Democratic Thought: A Natural Charter of Privilege," in The Development of an American Culture, ed. Stanley Coben & Lorman Ratner (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1970), 60-63.

2. Erving Goffman, Asylums - Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates (Garden City, N.Y., 1961), xiii & 4-6. David J. Rothman, The Discovery of the Asylum - Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston, 1971), 31-35, 50-52, 70, 102, 129, 188, 210, 213, & 285. See also Raymond A. Mohl, Poverty in New York, 1783-1825 (New York, 1971).

3. Frederick Rudolph, The American College and University - A History (New York, 1962), 96-101. Sam Bass Warner, Jr., The Private City - Philadelphia in Three Periods of Its Growth (Philadelphia, 1968), 115-16. Joseph J. McCadden, Education in Pennsylvania, 1801-1835 and Its Debt to Roberts Vaux (Philadelphia, 1937), 37, 43-44, 155, & 179-92. While Goffman equivocates somewhat as to whether or not round-the-clock confinement is a necessary condition for a total institution, I have treated it as such and prefer to think of the Society's daytime pauper schools as refuges rather than asylums. Goffman, Asylums, 4-6.

4. William W. Cutler, III, "Status, Values and the Education of the Poor: The Trustees of the New York Public School Society, 1805-1853," American Quarterly, XXIV (March, 1972), 69-85. The comparability of schools and asylums in early 19th century America has also been briefly examined by Carl F. Kaestle in his "The Origins of an Urban School System: New York City, 1750-1850," unpublished Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1970, 233 & 285 and in his "School Reform and the Urban School," a Review Essay in the History of Education Quarterly, XII (Summer, 1972), 221-22.

5. They include Ray A. Billington, The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860 (New York, 1938); Julia A. Duffy, "The Proper Objects of a Gratuitous Education: The Free School Society of the City of New York, 1805-1826," unpublished Ed.D. diss., Columbia University, 1968; Kaestle, "Origins of an Urban School System"; Vincent P. Lannie, Public Money and Parochial Education: Bishop Hughes, Governor Seward and the

New York School Controversy (Cleveland, 1968); Joseph J. McCadden, "New York's School Crisis of 1840-1842: Its Irish Antecedents," Thought, A Review of Culture and Idea, XLI (Winter, 1966), 561-88; Charles J. Mahoney, The Relation of State to Religious Education in Early New York, 1633-1825 (Washington, D. C., 1941); Raymond A. Mohl, "Education as Social Control in New York City, 1784-1825," New York History, LI (April, 1970), 219-37; Edward M. Connors, Church-State Relationships in Education in the State of New York (Washington, D. C., 1951); Carmine A. Yengo, "A Study of the Significance of DeWitt Clinton's Views in the Educational Development of New York State, 1800-1828," unpublished Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1958. Only Connors, Kaestle, and Yengo touch on the period 1826-1832 in the Society's history and none do so in any great depth.

6. Laws of the State of New York, 1804-1806 (Albany, 1806), ch. cviii. William O. Bourne, History of the Public School Society of New York with Portraits of the Presidents of the Society (New York, 1870), 21. An Account of the Free School Society of New York (New York, 1814), 3 & 10.

7. Bourne, History of the PSS, 20-21. Laws of the State of New York, Thirtieth Session (Albany, 1807), ch. xx. Minutes of the Common Council of the City of New York, 1784-1831 (19 vols.; New York, 1917), hereafter abbreviated M.C.C., IV, 358 & 363. Account of the FSS, 9.

8. Ibid., 13-15. Laws of the State of New York, Thirty-Fourth Session (Albany, 1811), ch. xxxiv. Laws of the State of New York, Forty-Second Session (Albany, 1819), ch. lxv & ccvi. Minutes of the Trustees of the Public [Free] School Society of New York in the Public [Free] School Society Papers, New York Historical Society, January 15 & 19, April 9 & July 2, 1819. Fourteenth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Free-School Society of New-York (New York, 1819), unpaginated. Aside from the Free School Society the first recipients of the school fund money in New York City were all the "incorporated religious societies" running charity schools in the city as well as the Orphan Asylum Society, the Society of the Economical School, and the African Free School. The Free School Society's first receipts from the fund during the school year 1814-1815 totaled $3,708.18. Tenth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Free-School Society of New-York (New York, 1815), unpaginated.

9. Journal of the Assembly [of New York], January 17 & February 5, 1822. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, January 4, 1822.

10. Free School Society - Growth, 1814-1823

	Pupils on Register/Attendance	Schools
May, 1814	798	2
1815	933	2
1816	988	2
1817	1015	2
1818	1044	3
1819	1250	4
1820	2023	4
1821	2589	4
1822	2873	5
1823	3844	5

Bourne, History of the PSS, 680-91. Ninth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Free-School Society of New-York (New York, 1814), unpaginated. Eighteenth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Free-School Society of New-York (New York, 1823), unpaginated. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, May 1, 1818. The trustees did not distinguish between enrollment and attendance in their early records, but judging from their constant complaints about truancy, it can be said with some confidence that actual attendance was considerably smaller than registration.

11. Bourne, History of the PSS, 44. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, August 2, 1822. Journal of the Assembly, January 17 & February 5, 1822. The New York legislature initially gave this surplus privilege to the Free School Society in 1817 and then extended it to the Hamilton Free School and the Female Association, both of which ran charity schools in New York City. Laws of the State of New York, Fortieth Session (Albany, 1817), ch. clxv. Laws of the State of New York, Forty-first Session (Albany 1818), ch. clxxxiv. Laws of the State of New York, Forty-second Session (Albany, 1819), ch. clxviii.

12. Laws of the State of New York, Forty-seventh Session (Albany, 1824), ch. cclxxvi. M.C.C., IV, 499. Tapped by the legislature to work with school commissioners appointed from each ward, the Common Council in 1825 apportioned the school fund among the Free School Society, the African Free Schools, the New York Orphan Asylum, and the Mechanical Society.

13. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, January 2, 1824 & January 29, 1825.

14. Bourne, History of the PSS, 85-94, esp. 90-92. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, January 29, 1825 & March 4, 1825.

15. Bourne, History of the PSS, 90-91. The trustees first discussed the idea of a pay plan in 1823 because of "some dissatisfaction ... among the middle classes of our citizens on account of their not partaking of the benefit of the common school fund." Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, July 4, 1823.

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16. M.C.C., XIV, 821-23 & 825. Laws of the State of New York, Forty-ninth Session (Albany, 1826), ch. xxv.

17. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, November 11 & 29, 1825 January 6 & November 10, 1826; February 2, 1827.

18. Ibid., February 2, 1827. Twenty-Second Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1827), 4-5. Twenty-Third Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1828), 10-11.

19. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, February 2, 1827.

20. Ibid., February 15, 1828.

21. Bourne, History of the PSS, 110-18.

22. Twenty-Second Annual Report, 4-5 & 8. Bourne, History of the PSS, 92.

23. "Twenty-Fourth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York," Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, May 1, 1829. Laws of the State of New York, Fifty-second Session (Albany, 1829), ch. cclxv. M.C.C., XVII, 696-702. No doubt it was helpful that the Council which supported the tax had seven members who had been or were then trustees of the Public School Society. They were William Seaman, John R. Peters, James Palmer, James I. Roosevelt, Jr., Gideon Lee, James N. Wells, and Peter Cooper. M.C.C., XVI, 589-90 & XVII, 451-52.

24. "Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York," Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, May 6, 1831. Laws of the State of New York, Fifty-fourth Session (Albany, 1831), ch. xix.

25. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, May 6 & November 4, 1831 & May 18, 1832. Bourne, History of the PSS, 150 & 617-18. Thomas Boese, Public Education in the City of New York (New York, 1869), 59. "Twenty-Sixth Annual Report," Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, May 6, 1831. Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1833), 6-7.

26. Twenty-Ninth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1834), 22.

27. Bourne, History of the PSS, 527, 234 & 395. Thirty-Seventh Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York with a Sketch of the Rise and Progress of the Society (New York, 1842), 5. New York Tribune, March 17, 1842.

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the Public School Society of New York in the Public /Free/ School Society Papers, New York Historical Society, August 5, 1841. In his speech to the Common Council Theodore Sedgwick also provided some partial but credible information on the occupations pursued by the parents of some of the children enrolled in the Society's schools in 1839. Although Sedgwick was trying to convince the Council that in catering to the poor the Society was not a "dangerous monopoly," the figures ring true and add further evidence to the contention that the trustees tended to lump all working men together and after 1832 again intended to concentrate on their education. "Of 16,000 children," Sedgwick said, "no less than 1,488, or about one tenth, are the children of laborers; 1,461, or nearly another tenth, are the children of widows; 945 shoemakers; 502 cabinetmakers; 416 masons; 579 tailors; 493 blacksmiths; while of clergymen there are but 13; of doctors 44; lawyers 25; and the gentlemen figure in the list to the amount of 26." Bourne, History of the PSS, 234. Italics his.

28. McCadden, Education in Pennsylvania, 37-40. Bourne, History of the PSS, 8-9. Eddy learned of the Lancastrian system from his transatlantic correspondent, Patrick Colquhoun, the one-time London police magistrate and urban reformer. Samuel L. Knapp, The Life of Thomas Eddy: comprising an Extensive Correspondence with many of the most Distinguished Philosophers and Philanthropists of his and other Countries (New York, 1834), 207 & 210.

29. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, August 1, 1817. Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 42. Italics theirs.

30. John Vanderbilt, Jr., An Address delivered in the New-York Free School on the 27th of December, 1809, by the W. P. M. John Vanderbilt, Jun. of Trinity Lodge, on the Introduction of Fifty Orphan and Helpless Children Belonging to the Masonic Fraternity (New York, 1810), 12-13. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, January 2, 1818.

31. Ibid., January 10, June 6 & July 4, 1823. In 1838 the Society adopted an explicit system of rules for the infliction of corporal punishment when absolutely necessary, but it was frequently disobeyed. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the PSS, April 5 & May 3, 1838 & May 1, 1851.

32. Thirty-Seventh Annual Report, 27. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, December 14, 1832 & January 25, 1833. Bourne History of the PSS, 612-13.

33. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, August 7 & November 6, 1829.

34. Ibid., February 3, 1832 & February 7, 1840. Forty-First Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1847), 8-9 & 31-35. Bourne, History of the PSS, 613. See also Rothman, Discovery of the Asylum, 120-21. According to Erving Goffman, in one way or another most total institutions limit their inmates' opportunities for self-determination which to some extent is what the Society did when it curtailed emulation and competition in its schools, making them that much more comparable to asylums. Goffman, Asylums, 48-50.

35. Michael B. Katz, Class, Bureaucracy, & Schools - The Illusion of Educational Change in America (New York, 1971), 11.

36. A Manual of the System of Discipline and Instruction for the Schools of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1845), 7-9. A Manual of the System of Discipline and Instruction for the Schools of the Public School Society of New-York, instituted in the year 1805 (New York, 1850), 11-12.

37. Edwin Stone, A History of Beverly, Civil and Ecclesiastical from its Settlement in 1630 to 1842 (Boston, 1843), 150-154 and Common School Journal, 15: 242-43 (August 1, 1844) quoted in Katz, Irony of Early School Reform, 137-38. Ibid., 149-50. Katz, Class, Bureaucracy, & Schools, 43-44.

38. Kaestle, "Origins of an Urban School System." Stanley K. Schultz, The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860 (New York, 1973), 145-53.

39. Nineteenth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Free-School Society of New-York (New York, 1824), 23. Solyman Brown, A Comparison View of the Systems of Pestalozzi and Lancaster in an Address delivered before the Society of Teachers in the City of New-York in the Hall of the Mechanical Institution at their Anniversary, in January, 1825 (New York, 1825), 20-22. McCadden, Education in Pennsylvania, 44-58. Katz, Irony of Early School Reform, 131-38.

40. Ellwood P. Cubberley, Public Education in the United States (Boston, 1919), 96-99. McCadden, Education in Pennsylvania, 45. Bourne, History of the PSS, 658-59. American Journal of Education, I (1826), 701; II (1827), 573.

41. McCadden, Education in Pennsylvania, 45. John F. C. Harrison, ed., Utopianism and Education: Robert Owen and the Owenites (New York, 1968), 29-31, 132-35, & 145. Robert Dale Owen, An Outline of the System of Education at New Lanark (Glasgow, 1824) quoted in Harrison, Utopianism and Education, 135.

42. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, February 4, 1828. Boese, Public Education in New York, 50-51. John W. Adamson, English Education, 1789-1902 (Cambridge, England, 1964), 22-23. David Salmon & Winifred Hindshaw, Infant Schools - Their History and Theory (London, 1904), 8-17.

43. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, October 13, 1827 & February 4, 1828. Bourne, History of the PSS, 660-61.

44. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, May 15, 1829. Twenty-Third Annual Report, 7-8.

45. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, September 24 & November 5, 1830. "Twenty-Sixth Annual Report," ibid., May 6, 1831.

46. Bourne, History of the PSS, 152-53. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, November 2, 1832. "Twenty-Seventh Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York," ibid., May 4, 1832. Twenty-Eighth Annual Report, 8-9 & 12.

47. Thirtieth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1835), 6. Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Trustees of the Public School Society of New-York (New York, 1840), 3. The Society's first school exclusively for the young children of German immigrants came in 1838 and the second, especially for girls, one year later. Embarrassed by their foreign "language, dress, /and/ manners," the trustees said, such children stayed away from the Society's regular schools, and although these special schools did not Americanize to the trustees' satisfaction, they were retained after 1840 because they taught English to children who would otherwise "leave school entirely." In fact, having perpetuated more than helped overcome cultural distinctions, these German schools proved to have the same divisive fault earlier attributed by the trustees to common schools, and when the small Italian community in New York requested a similar school for its children in 1843, the Society refused to comply. That schools for the poor might function in the same way the trustees either did not realize or chose to ignore. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the PSS, December 7, 1837, July 4, 1839, November 5, 1840, & May 2 & July 6, 1843. Minutes of the Primary School Committee of the Public School Society of New York in the Public /Free/ School Society Papers, New York Historical Society, January 31, 1838, July 31, 1839, & May 17 & 31, 1843.

48. Minutes of the Trustees of the PSS, November 5, 1830. Twenty-Eighth Annual Report, 12.

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49. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the PSS, January 25, February 6, & March 6, 1845.

50. Minutes of the Primary School Committee of the PSS, January 2 & May 22, 1839. Minutes of the Executive Committee of the PSS, May 23, 1839. The promotions to Public School between February, 1838 and February, 1839 were as follows:

Primary Departments - 658 promoted of 2195
Average stay of all pupils,
2 years & 1 month

Primary Schools - 667 promoted of 3354
Average stay of all pupils,
3 years & 2 months

Minutes of the Executive Committee of the PSS, May 23, 1839.